



News Release

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Inversion Season Raises Indoor/Outdoor Recess Questions

Online resources can help schools, parents make decisions

(Salt Lake City) It's that time of year again when poor air quality caused by inversions becomes a health concern for many Utahns, especially children and those with chronic health conditions.

The Utah Departments of Health (UDOH) and Environmental Quality (DEQ) are reminding Utahns about an important online tool to track outdoor air quality - the Recess Guidance for Schools. The Guidance was developed to help school leaders know when the air is bad enough to keep students indoors.

"Many people don't feel well when the air quality is poor," said Rebecca Jorgensen of the UDOH Asthma Program. "Children are especially affected by dirty air and it's important they be kept inside on the worst air quality days."

UDOH and DEQ have worked with schools to implement the guidance over the past several years. School administrators using the guidance check PM_{2.5} levels daily. When levels are between 35.5-55.4 ug/m³, 'sensitive' students are accommodated indoors. At 55.5-90 ug/m³, 'sensitive' students and those experiencing respiratory symptoms will be accommodated indoors and, at 90 ug/m³ and above, it is recommended that all students be kept inside for recess and sports.

"The PM_{2.5} levels are updated hourly for Cache, Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, and Utah Counties," said DEQ toxicologist Steven Packham. "That makes the web site a great tool for

both schools and parents, allowing them to check air quality for themselves and make informed decisions about physical activity outdoors on a real-time basis.”

“Parents play an especially important role in the use of the guidance,” said Jorgensen. “If they think their child is sensitive to PM2.5 they should talk to their health care provider and then contact the school to let them know at what level the student should be kept indoors.”

School leaders and parents are encouraged to use the Recess Guidance and an individual’s sensitivity rather than the yellow and red color alerts to determine when students should be kept indoors. Yellow and red air alert days are a call for public action to reduce pollution, while the Recess Guidance was developed from three years of data collected by UDOH and DEQ on the impact of air quality on students’ health.

To see current PM2.5 readings visit <http://www.airquality.utah.gov> and click on ‘Current Conditions.’ To see the recess guidance visit <http://health.utah.gov/asthma/>

For more information on how to improve air quality visit www.cleanair.utah.gov or <http://www.idlefree.utah.gov/>.

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